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A  
D E F N C E  
OF THE  
A C C O U N T,

Published by

Alexander Kilham,

OF HIS

T R I A L

BEFORE THE

LONDON CONFERENCE,

*One Thousand Seven Hundred and Ninety-six;*

In Answer to

*Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Benson.*

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WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.

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“ Truth is great—and will prevail.”

L E E D S :

Printed by BINNS and BROWN ;

And sold by all the Distributors of the Methodist Monitor.

(Price Four-pence.)





## A Defence, &c.

"And after five days Ananias, the high-priest, descended with the elders, and with a certain orator, named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying—We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ring-leader of the sect called Nazarenes: who had also gone about to profane the temple, whom we took, and would have judged according to our law, but the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come unto thee, by examining of whom, thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.—Then Paul answered—They neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogue, nor in the city: Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me." Acts xxiv. 1, &c.

**W**HEN Mr. Benson answered Messrs. Tatham and Russel he met their arguments fairly, and confuted his opponents by the infallible word of God.—He endeavoured to guard his pen against abusive language, and his answers do honour to the Methodist connexion.—Mr. Russel stooped to language degrading to the clerical order, but Mr. Benson, though very keen, and in some places satirical, did not debase his cause with epithets reproachful to christianity. Happy would it have been for him and his brethren, had they carefully avoided the appearance of evil, in their late publications. Perhaps nothing has

hurt their cause so much, as the spirit which they discover in their writings. It would be very easy to imitate their example, and to give place to *scurrilous language*, fitter for Billingsgate than for a minister of Jesus Christ. I hope, by the grace of God, to avoid every thing that would justly offend the most pious and sincere in the religion of Jesus.

The first part of the pamphlet is introductory :—it is an attack upon the passions of the people. It will be noticed in the following pages. There are two things which the reader will be kind enough to keep in view.

1. That the preachers who attack us, studiously keep out of sight the principal subjects of dispute.

2. They raise an host of *imaginary* foes, which they represent in a most formidable manner, and attack with all their might.

1. The following subjects are the chief object of our complaint : and which we earnestly desire may be speedily altered, for the glory of God, and the good of his cause.

1. An assistant preacher, with the help of a leader, can receive members to, or exclude them from the society, without the knowledge or consent of the people. There is no positive law to the contrary. And all the arguments Mr. Benson, or any of his friends have brought forward on this head, do not in the least invalidate this assertion. Because saying, ' It is our custom, or our rule ' to consult, is nothing. There is no law to bind any assistant preacher to do it.—Many preachers act contrary to what is called ' general custom, ' in receiving members to, or excluding them from the society, and are accountable to none but the conference for their conduct.

2. An assistant preacher can, of his own will, appoint or remove leaders, and town and circuit stewards, without the knowledge or consent of the people. There is no law that requires him to consult a leaders' meeting, and act in conjunction with the brethren, in this business. What is general custom or rule, if it is not binding? —Where is there a circuit, which could not produce facts, that assistant preachers have appointed to, or removed from their office, leaders, and town and circuit stewards, often against the consent of the people, and to their grief and sorrow.

3. An assistant preacher, before the last conference, could appoint local preachers, give them plans, and send them to different places, without asking any person in the circuit

circuit a question on the subject. This has been done in a number of places, to the grief of thousands. A new rule was made last August on this head, which is calculated to be of service to the connexion.

4. When I wrote the *Progress of Liberty*, an assistant preacher could recommend different persons to travel, and get them appointed to circuits, without either consulting individuals, or leaders' or quarterly meetings. And the alteration that has taken place on this head, at the last conference only, requires, that those who come out to travel, should be mentioned in leaders' and quarterly meetings.—The preachers reserve the power of *approving* and *appointing* to the district meetings and the conference, where none are present but themselves.

5. When persons are brought out on trial to travel, the preachers can admit them into full connexion, without asking the people a question on the subject. They can do this when the persons on trial are far from being acceptable to the circuits where they have laboured. Has not this been done in a number of instances, since the death of Mr. Wesley?

6. Assistant preachers, with their colleagues, can receive the money collected quarterly, the yearly, Kingswood-school, and the preachers' fund collections, in a vast number of places, without the people knowing what is received, and whether the money be paid in or not, that they know is received. This is particularly the case with the preachers' fund collection. All the regulations on this head do not require, that a preacher should be constrained to receive those collections from the hands of stewards, or other respectable persons, after they have been properly entered into the books belonging to the different societies. If the preacher be required to leave an account of the gross sums he has received from the different societies, for the yearly collection, Kingswood-school, and preachers' fund, upon the plan he gives to his successor, or in the circuit-book, he is by no means required to bring notes from the different places where the collections were made, to witness that the accounts are exact.

7. The preachers of a district can meet together when they please, and consider subjects of the greatest importance to the different societies, and not admit a single person to be present from the people. This is done every year.—



Persons that place implicit confidence in man may be satisfied ; but sensible, thinking men, consider this as contrary to the interests of the people.

8. Once a year, preachers from every part of the connexion meet together, without the people being allowed to have a single representative among them. They examine each others character.—They divide circuits as they please—They receive members to, or expel them from their body—They disburse the collections according to the counsel of their own will—They abrogate, alter, or make laws, binding upon the societies every where, without consulting them—They appoint each other to supply the circuits for the next year—They either publish or not the different accounts of the collections—And since they detailed them, they have published contradictory accounts, calculated to bewilder the reader. All the affairs of conference are managed solely by the preachers. The people are not allowed to have a single voice or a representative in that assembly.——This system is the object of my attack in the pieces which I have published. Others have exposed it in strong terms. In my pamphlets, I illustrated the different things objected against, by facts, manifested in the conduct of several preachers. If I had not done this many persons would have declared, that though the system cannot be justified, the conduct of the preachers has never been found to militate against the rules laid down by Jesus Christ and his apostles. Men may act contrary to the gospel, upon the best systems ; but where a plan is established, that places *strong temptation* in the way, it is easy to be entangled and brought into bondage. These brethren ask, ‘ Is christianity to be blamed for the faults of its professors ? And is the Methodist system wrong, because a *few rare* instances have occurred, of persons who avowed an attachment to it, and yet became wicked, and cast off the restraints of it ?’

If christianity proposed a system of rules similar to the above, which are the object of our attack, and ministers acted contrary to the interests of the people under it, would not some of the blame rest upon the system ? But if Methodism and christianity differ in the points we controvert, we may seek to have good rules established, without taking any steps to overthrow the christian religion.

Now,



Now, I appeal to Mr. Benson and his friends, whether or not they acted with candour, when they purposely avoided meeting the subject? Have they in any part of this pamphlet, or in any other, attempted to prove, that no such system exists among us? They are conscious, that were they to meet the subject fairly, it would be impossible to justify the measures we oppose, either by *scripture or fair reasoning*.

2. They raise an host of imaginary foes, which they represent in a most formidable manner, and attack with all their might. They represent me as wishing to alter the doctrines—change the whole system—introduce Mr. Paine's plan of politics—destroy the work of God—and ruin the souls of the people. They declare, 'I have searched the connexion from one end of the land to the other, sparing neither age nor station,' to find out crimes to 'bespatter and blacken the whole body.' That I have not been averse 'to open and rake up these sinks, and that repeatedly, and to the *very bottom*, that from thence I might get dirt to throw at my fathers and brethren, and even at the memory of him who, under God, was the father of us all.'

I am represented as imposing on the people—dissembling with the trustees—flattering the young preachers—treating the old preachers with sovereign contempt—striving to raise a party, &c. &c. &c.——These imaginary foes are the objects which they pursue with all their might, and endeavour to destroy.

Let any candid reader, carefully examine the different pamphlets which I have published, and he will be convinced, that these things cannot be fairly deduced from any thing in them. But if these worthy brethren had not raised this host, they would have had nothing to attack, but *the principles we have laid down*; and being conscious they could not be overthrown, the eyes of the people would have been opened at once, and they would have seen into the merits of the cause, without any difficulty. But now a mist is raised on every side, subjects extraneous are brought forward, to bewilder the minds of the intelligent, and arguments made use of, to keep those that are ignorant, from so much as attempting to examine the subjects in dispute, *lest their souls should be hurt*. But many are awakening from the stupor that has been so long upon them, and are determined to examine these matters themselves, and

and not to be imposed upon by any arguments that are made use of by any persons who oppose their interests.

Having made these remarks, let us come to the professed design of this pamphlet; that is, a Defence of the Conference in my expulsion.

1. They justify their conduct by alluding to the time I was admitted into full connexion, and receiving the minutes from Mr. Wesley's hand:—and to my agreeing at the Manchester Conference, 1791, 'to follow strictly the plan Mr. Wesley left us at his death.' I would ask these brethren, wherein I have acted contrary to the large minutes since I first entered into the connexion? It is true, one place requires that we should not 'mend, but keep' the rules the minutes contain. But do the minutes require, that should any person suppose he saw some things that might be mended, he is not to propose any amendments to the people? Have I done any thing farther, than point out wherein I think our plan is defective, and proposed several things which appear necessary to be adopted for our future welfare? Have I in any circuit altered the laws of Methodism?—Did I 'cease to walk by those rules' in any place where I was called to labour?—Did I ever attempt 'to alter the *first* and *fundamental* principles of our union?'

But if, when I received the minutes from Mr. Wesley, I had not sufficiently examined them: or if afterwards, by reading and meditation, my mind was led to compare our system with the scriptures, and with the forms of church government established in different places; and if this led me to see a number of things in our system contrary to the scriptures, and to the interests of the people, was it a crime in me to point out those evils, and to propose amendments?—Or would it have been right to have sat down with them, because I had taken the minutes from Mr. Wesley, and proposed to walk by them, before I had sufficiently examined their import? According to this mode of reasoning, St. Paul ought to have continued a Pharisee of the Pharisees—Martin Luther a member of the church of Rome—Mr. Wesley a strict churchman, in every point, &c. without attempting to point out any amendments.

2. They endeavour to persuade their readers, that 'he (A. K.) stood up before God, in a religious and solemn meeting,  
in

in the presence of 150 witnesses, all ministers of Christ, and declares his belief and attachment to certain rules and doctrines, which they and he are agreed to walk by, and then when questioned about what he has published contrary thereto, comes gravely forward and says, 'he only meant that he assented to them, as far as he thought them agreeable to scripture.' What egregious trifling is this?—The reader will be kind enough to notice the following remarks:—

1. I gave them in writing my sentiments upon this subject, previous to their trying me this way. And in the paper they received, I expressly declared, that I would conform to all the laws and rules of the conference, as far as they agree with the scriptures. This paper is published in my trial. I saw the snare they were laying, and determined to avoid it, if possible. They first proposed, that all who agreed, 'to follow strictly the plan Mr. Wesley left us at his death would stand up.' I stood up among the rest. Several of them appeared amazed, and declared, I had renounced the sentiments published in my pamphlets. I told them I had not, for Mr. Wesley declared, he had no fixed plan. His plan was to follow the openings of divine providence. And I have shown, in the pamphlets, signed Paul and Silas, that he frequently altered his plan, and acted as the nature of things required. When this scheme failed, they proposed the minutes of the conference, as what they meant to abide by. But Mr. Bradford informed us, it was not supposed that every little thing in the minutes could be binding; or words to this effect. Mr. Bradburn said to me, 'Bless your heart, no person considers all that the minutes contain as binding, it is their general design we have in view;' or words to this effect.—When the preachers stood up to the minutes, I was one among the number that agreed to them in the general view. But Mr. Thompson endeavoured to show, that by standing up I had renounced every thing the pamphlets contained, which militated against the minutes. And when I declared, that the paper I had given them contained my sentiments [that is, that I would be conformed to the rules and laws of Methodism, as far as they are according to the scriptures] and that I would not recede from my written declaration, Mr. Benson objected, and wanted me to agree to the minutes without any qualification at all.—

It



It was then I quoted his own words, in the title page of the first number of the Monitor, which seemed to confuse him. And it was not him, but Mr. Bradburn, that smiled, and sat down. Hear Mr. Benson's reasoning upon this subject 'Has Mr. B——— published, or written, or intimated' any where, that he, or any man is to *subscribe*, or declare his *assent* to, or *approbation* of, or determination to abide by any creeds, confessions of faith, or articles of religion, or rules whatsoever, whether of doctrine or discipline, which he does not previously believe, and judge to be consistent with the scriptures? Pray what has he or any one to do to join himself to, or continue among a people whose *doctrine and discipline* he does not believe to be consistent with the scriptures?

Pray what has all this to do with my declaring, That I would agree to the minutes as far as they are agreeable to the scriptures? Does Mr. Benson, or his brethren believe, that the minutes and rules are in every thing agreeable to the scriptures?—Do the scriptures require, that no man shall taste spirituous liquors except they are prescribed by a physician?—That a man shall not touch tobacco or snuff.—That no preacher shall sup from his lodging, or be out late than nine o'clock?—That no chapel shall be built in the octagon form, &c. &c.?—And are not these minutes of the conference?

I appeal to the reader's conscience, whether my conduct, in declaring I would agree to the minutes so far as they are agreeable to the scriptures, was a reproach to my character or not? Would it not have been base in me to have declared, I believed them scriptural, and would conform exactly to them, when I knew in many things they require, what the bible does not enjoin; and when I was conscious, that many of the rules are only laughed at by some of the preachers, because of their peculiarity, and renounced in practice by all?—Yet these worthy brethren consider me as ignorant and impertinent—an egregious trifler—as acting on a principle of mental reservation, which had the martyrs stooped to, they might have been saved—I am considered as guilty of 'meanness and prevarication—giving my *assent* and *attachment* to what I *disapproved of* in my heart—as wanting in *integrity and courage* to avow my sentiments—as a slippery Proteous, that no tie could hold.'

This:



This is their rhetoric. Had I refused to declare my sentiments openly before them all, then such expressions would have had some meaning in them. But when I avowed my principles on the spot, in their presence, without the least disguise, their using language of this nature, is an attack upon the passions, and not upon the understanding. Nay, the expressions themselves, are beneath the dignity of those that signed the pamphlet.

3. They say, 'another thing that sunk him prodigiously in the esteem of his brethren, was his being unable to make good *any one of the charges* he had brought and published to the world, against divers of the preachers, although he had pledged himself to prove them before the conference.'——In my account of the trial, I purposely avoided publishing any thing but the particulars that were brought before the preachers, at the time of my examination. And the people in general, who read the account, supposed the charges sufficiently authenticated. When the conference published a letter through the nation, in which they held out the same declaration, many of the friends in London, and a vast number in other places were amazed at this positive assertion. They said, if I could not prove them, only let the conference come to us, and we will do it at once. Were it necessary, there are thousands that could prove every charge, from what they have seen and heard. If I 'sunk prodigiously' in the opinion of the preachers on this head, the people, that determined to think for themselves, were of a different opinion.

They consider every charge sufficiently proved, and are astonished that Mr. Benson should bring forward the same declaration. After several assertions about the falseness of my charges, as usual, the passions of the people are again attacked. They draw conclusions from premises of their own, and ask, 'what compensation can this man make to the persons he has aspersed?—to their friends and relations?—to the whole body of preachers and people, of which they were members?—or to the church of God in general? &c. &c.'

What have questions of this nature to do with the subject? Have I aspersed the characters of any of the preachers, or related facts which are self-evident?——Do these  
brethren

brethren think of working upon the passions of the people, to blind their understanding?—Was there any sin in my smiling, when 150 preachers disputed for an hour; to know whether I was trying them, or they were trying me?—Do they think of terrifying me and my friends by threatenings of eternal judgment, unless ‘deep repentance’ take place, before we are convinced of our sin?—If Mr. Benson wept when he saw the preachers determined to force the trustees into a law-suit, might he not have wept with equal propriety, when he saw them resolved to cut off one of their body, for telling them the truth?—If several of the preachers have wept over my ‘indiscretion and obstinacy,’ ought they not also to have wept over their own conduct, in determining to withhold the privileges of the people from them?—Have I ‘pulled down God’s temple,’ or are the preachers, by resolving to retain undue power and influence over the people, likely to accomplish this evil?—If my plan be only a ‘sorry, clumsy superstructure of wood, hay, and stubble,’ why should the preachers be so very much alarmed?—Will not the truth burn up the ‘sorry, clumsy wood, hay, and stubble’ I have built, if they properly apply it?—But if many of their own rules and laws of discipline are of this nature, it is their wisdom to keep the fire of truth as much from them as possible, lest they should be consumed?—We have reason to bless God, ‘that the reign of popery is so far over and gone’ with us, that their ‘enquiries do not trouble me, nor any whose minds are full of new schemes of liberty, &c.’—Nothing can affect us but unadulterated truth.—Light to the understanding, and conviction to the conscience.—An appeal to our passions does not create any sorrow in our heart.

Mr. Benson quotes the Greek to show what an heretic is, Titus-iii. 10.—A sect or party man. He brings forward Romans xvi. 17. to show, that scripture itself required my expulsion.—They say, ‘If the conference had acted according to the plain letter of the scripture, they would have rejected him at the London conference, four years ago, for the disputes and contentions he had excited at Newcastle-upon-Tyne the year

year before, and his \* inflammatory pamphlet that year.' At the London conference, four years ago, Mr. Benson declared, Messrs. Thomas Taylor and Bradburn had written worse pamphlets than mine, on the same subject, and he was amazed at the partiality of the preachers in suffering them to be passed over without a trial, when they had been so very severe upon me.

If the preachers sinned against God at that time, in refusing to act 'according to the plain letter of the scriptures,' by showing mercy to me, did they not act contrary to the bible, in refusing to try those who were equally guilty, and in permitting them to continue in connexion, *Mr. Benson himself being judge?*—But these brethren should not lay to my account 'the disputes and contentions excited at Newcastle.' They were begun long before I saw that place. And the division of that society, was occasioned by Mr. Cownley's giving the sacrament at Byker, before I wrote a line upon the subject. They should also recollect, that I was not 'sent to Scotland' as a punishment for what I had done, but offered voluntarily to go, when other preachers refused, if they would only allow me to stay at Newcastle till my wife should recover from child-bearing, and be able to bear the fatigues of such a long journey.

4. The next 'ground on which we defend the conduct of his expulsion, is, the false charges brought against divers of the preachers, and repeatedly published to the world, and the indecent and slanderous language he has made use of on this head.' It is asked, 'did he not acknowledge his fault, and promise amendment?' They own

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\* Mr. Pawson, who signed this pamphlet, received fifty of those I published in Newcastle. He spoke highly of, and spread them among his friends. I received a very kind letter from him on the occasion. Had I been at Leeds, an extract should have been inserted here. In that letter, he speaks in warm terms of the reception my pamphlet met with at the district meeting. At that time we were only contending about the branches; the root was left untouched; that is, the undue power and influence of the leading preachers. Since their power has been regarded as too great to be possessed by *any ministers*, those that were my friends, are now my most violent opposers. There is nothing new in this. It is according to the conduct of the clergy in all ages, since the time of Constantine.



I did confess 'in some degree; but what are these faint and minced confessions, when compared with the greatness of his guilt? &c.' 'And as to promises of amendment, he neither made any, that we recollect, or gave us any reason to suppose, that in this particular he would amend. Had we expected any such thing, his conduct since that period has demonstrated we should have been disappointed; for his last pamphlet abounds with fresh instances of falsehood and misrepresentation.'

In the conference I repeatedly declared, if they could convince me by argument and scripture, that I had acted contrary to the gospel of Christ, I would cheerfully confess my offence, in the new chapel, before the congregation, should they require it: but at the same time they were informed, that nothing less than a conviction of guilt, could excite a sincere confession from me. As far as I was convinced of any error, it was willingly acknowledged.—And however these worthy brethren may call it a 'faint and minced confession,' there is a God that will judge righteously on this subject, and in due time will convince my opposers, that my acknowledgments were sincere.—Had I '*slandered and vilified* a whole body of preachers,' my guilt would have been great indeed: and my confession ought to have kept pace with it. But I have not '*slandered and vilified*' the body of the Methodist preachers, neither directly, nor indirectly. And I cannot think that these brethren have avoided the crime they charge upon me, in torturing what I have written in some places, to contradict plain declarations in other parts of the pamphlets. If they should be found by the impartial, to be guilty of slandering and vilifying me, in the very place where they charge me with these evils, perhaps they will say, 'worthy physicians, heal yourselves!'

Under the same head, they bring forward a passage from my account of the conference trial, to make me appear odious before all. In the minutes of the conference, they added up what they had received from the yearly collection, and made it near a thousand pounds more than the different sums amounted to. I did not think that 150 preachers would have made such a mistake in addition. It never entered my mind to spend half an hour in adding up the different columns to find out the mistake.

I did



I did not know that the account was wrong, till I received a letter from Nottingham in Sunderland, several weeks after I had published my account of the trial. In the trial, supposing their account to be just, I say, 'This is a great mystery! when it is known that many circuits gave less this year than formerly.' Was it not natural to declare, it was a mystery, how the collection should increase near a thousand pounds, when it was known that many circuits had not given so much as usual?

They fall foul upon me, however; at once, and say,— 'Oh! Brethren, this is vile! This is diabolical indeed! This is pure malice!' But after this christian language, these worthy brethren draw a number of inferences, and charge me with a want of 'the charity that hopeth all things!' It appears, that these fathers in the gospel, under the influence of the 'charity that hopeth all things,' could cry out (upon my saying it was a mystery to me, and others, how the yearly collection should be near a thousand pounds more than usual) 'this is vile! this is diabolical!' judge, whether their charity hopeth better things of me, than mine hopes of them?

In this passage they charge me, under the influence of the 'charity that hopeth all things,' with having this end in view, 'by every possible means to excite suspicion and jealousy in the minds of the people against their teachers.— With this only view he asks, 'Why are not the other collections detailed the same way?' Why! undoubtedly, that the preachers might have an opportunity of pocketing part of the money without discovery! Oh brethren!—but we spare him. God be merciful to him! For if detraction, slander, and false accusation be sins, he is a sinner indeed!

All this wickedness of mine took its rise from their adding up the yearly collection wrong, and my declaring it was a mystery that it should be so much more this year than usual. After these worthy fathers have scourged me handsomely, with a few hard words, it seems that their 'charity that hopeth all things' operated a little tenderly towards me. This is discovered in two things. 1. 'Oh brethren!—but we spare him.' It is a great act of charity not to punish according to the nature of the offence. 2. 'God be merciful to him.' To have an interest

in the prayers of good men, is a great blessing.——  
I return my sincere thanks to my opponents, for their  
sparing mercy, and for their pathetic prayers on my ac-  
count. May the Lord hear, and deliver!

After struggling a little for a reason why they did not  
detail the other collections, they inform us, 'It is because  
the conference thought, that all the friends, whose jealou-  
sies he had excited, wished to know, was, how the money  
subscribed for the contingent fund was expended.'——  
'They then promise, that 'they shall be gratified in this  
too, the next conference, if we can have any influence.'——  
'To make the subject ridiculous, they observe, 'to publish  
only the gross *sum* raised for *each* charity in *each* circuit,  
will not be sufficient. The sum received from *each* society  
in each circuit must also be printed; nay, and that receiv-  
ed from *each* individual in each society, otherwise there will  
still be room for deception.'

If these fathers think to scout the idea of detailing, by  
placing it in this ridiculous light, others will view it in a  
more favourable point. It would be exceedingly easy to  
give the people all the satisfaction they can reasonably de-  
sire, in a different way. Only let all the collections be re-  
ceived by the stewards—the stewards send them to delegates  
appointed from the circuits to attend the district meetings  
—and at the district meetings let delegates be appointed to  
attend the conference, and carry in the collections, &c.—  
If the preachers never received any of the collections, it  
would not be possible for jealousies to exist on this  
head.

In order to embarrass the subject, they wish me to pro-  
pose a plan to watch stewards, class leaders, persons that  
receive seat tickets, &c. They say, 'We submit it to his  
consideration, whether there ought not to be *one* or *more*  
persons in each class, chosen by a majority of votes, to  
count the pence, and watch the leaders as to these particu-  
lars; and then, as these persons also may be capable of  
being bribed, and becoming accomplices in the sacrilege,  
whether others again should not be appointed to watch  
them, and so on, till watchful jealousy has pervaded and  
spread its influence to the whole body, and to every indi-  
vidual of it,' &c.

If Messrs. Mather, &c. think to raise a mist before the  
people this way, to prevent them from viewing the sub-  
ject

ject in a proper light, their end will not be accomplished. Besides, in my judgment, it would be better to have all the watchers they mention, not to excite, but prevent jealousies, than to put too much confidence in the priest-hood. Implicit faith in ministers of Christ, is an evil that ought to be dreaded. Every honest man wishes to act by rules that will bear the strictest examination. The plan we propose, of having the collections put into the hands of stewards and delegates, would free them from a number of difficulties, and at the same time, it would satisfy the societies at large.

Mr. Rodda's letter is brought forward again. It was a dirty paper, unsealed (not like a letter) left on the table in the vestry-room, at Salford. When my friend's curiosity led him to open it, and when he saw the word *bull*, he read it through; and thinking that evidence could be brought from the *very persons* that *violently opposed* and reproached me, he favoured me with the letter.——Does Mr. Benson suppose, because this friend imagined I should want evidence, that it is just for him to conclude, that I published a number of things before I knew of evidence to make them good? Will his three notes of admiration make this conclusion just? When I acknowledged myself satisfied on some parts of this letter, it was from the accounts I heard in the conference, being so favourable. But when we retired from the chapel, and several preachers gave a different account of the matter, declaring themselves very much dissatisfied, I soon beheld the subject in a different light, and felt what I have expressed in my trial.—It is not of very great importance whether my friend found the letter on the table or on the floor, as Mr. Mather had left the room, and was engaged in the chapel. When this letter came to my hand, from the very men that were reproaching me, and declaring I had published a number of lies, it appeared exceedingly strange, that I should be able, out of their own mouth, to bring evidence in confirmation of what I had published. In my letter to Mr. Mather, inclosing Mr. Rodda's letter, I said, 'By a singular (not divine, as they have published) providence, this letter has fallen into my hands.' When the letter was read, Mr. Pawson cried out, 'It was a devilish providence.' Mr. Rodda, perhaps, might make use of the same words.



As they have brought up the letter so often, and endeavoured to palliate its contents, I think it my duty now to publish that part of it, which refers to our affairs.—— The following is a copy as near verbatim as possible. It is so in every material expression, but in a place or two, where the paper was folded, a few words could not be made out. The sense, however, in those places is retained :

*A Copy of a Letter from Mr. Rodda to Mr. Mather.*

*Newcastle, March 26, 1796.*

My Dear Sir,

Your kind favour came to hand this morning ; accept my thanks. If all our brethren saw things in the light we do, there would not be a jarring string in all our connexion. I have possession of Mr. Kilham's Methodistical Bull.—— Whenever I see hasty productions, two Greek proverbs occur to my mind : —‘ Speak nothing, or that which is better than nothing.’——‘ Think twice before you speak once.’ I am fond of no man's writing controversy, in effect, to do evil that good may come. The author has attacked characters, and basely slandered them that have done credit to our religious society, when the writer lay in the loins of his father.——How truly may a Hopper, a M——r, a Thompson, and many others, individually say, ‘ But now they that are younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have scorned to have set with the dogs of my flock.’ What is said by the owners of the bull, ‘ We may take our farewell of primitive Methodism,’ has been deeply anticipated by three or four of the men, ever since the death of Mr. Wesley.

‘ Where the assistants are held forth as a company of whining jesuits, though the charge does not implicate my guilt, as being out of office, yet it affects me as an unjust and uncharitable charge, brought against a very respectable branch of our body ; and when that part is well filled, is essentially necessary to our well-being. I have been informed that the district have met, and done nothing.—— I am far from being a friend to intolerance ; but am sure many things since Mr. Wesley's death have been passed over



over almost in silence ; which had his place been filled in the executive part of our government, would have been greatly censured, if not expelled the authors of them.

‘ What would a K—— (a Kilham) say of Dr. C—— and H—— M—— taking eighteen guineas at a time out of the book money, without the knowledge or consent of the book committee ? as was the case when I was a member of it, and with Mr. Bradford and Creighton, bore my testimony against it. Or J. Rogers secreting the deeds of the goods in the preachers’ house in London, in keeping it from the gentlemen whose names were in it ?——Or of the late peculation in the Kingswood money ? I write now to a friend, who, had he been at the head of affairs and continued so, would not have passed over these transactions unnoticed. You talk of retiring—so do I. But can we retire any whither where our eyes will not affect our hearts.——Will not Methodism be torn into a thousand pieces. Alas ! it is nearly at its *ne plus ultra*.——I am fully persuaded, the day you stood upon your feet, and did not use them in the slow or quick march, you might truly have said at night,——‘ My friends, I have lost a day.’

‘ Mr. Benson informs me, he has no small trouble with the sacramentarians. He advises me to continue as long as I can. I am come to no determination about it.’

‘ R. RODDA.’

The main point in this letter is the 80*l*. To the best of my knowledge, the name of the person who received the money was never mentioned in the conference. I asked several preachers after, if they knew who received it, but they were ignorant of the person’s name. At the time of the conference, it was supposed, that a mistake might be made in counting the money. It seemed uncertain, whether it was peculated or not ; but in the Affectionate Address, published since the conference, we have these words : ‘ Mr. Pawson is happy to say, that in the presence of several witnesses, he delivered up the money ; nothing was wanting then, as a letter from Mr. Bradford received this day bears witness, who was present at the time.’ —— Here we have a positive declaration, that the money was paid in by Mr. Pawson, in the presence of several witnesses ;

witnesses; *nothing* was then wanting. But the name of the person who received it is kept back. If it were all paid in—if nothing were wanting, it must be either lost or peculated. In the last pamphlet they have made the matter

‘Worse for mending—washed to fouler stains.’

They say, ‘At the Bristol Conference in 1794, Messrs. Pawson and Bradford counted the Kingswood collection, and delivered it to Mr. Bradburn, with a note of the sum.—Afterwards when he delivered it, with the note specifying the sum to Mr. Rodda, it was deficient, according to what Messrs. Pawson and Bradford counted it. This is the simple fact, which we apprehend may be accounted for, without the charge of peculation, although, in the confidence of friendship that term had been used by Mr. R——. For all men conversant with money matters know, that mistakes often do and will arise many ways.—The most strict and serious enquiry was made into the business the conference next ensuing. But where the mistake is in this case, we confess we are not able to determine.’—It appears very strange that these brethren should have overlooked what the Affectionate Address declares, that is, Mr. Pawson’s happiness in assuring us, he paid the *whole sum* in the presence of several witnesses—that nothing was wanting.

It appears evident, that Mr. Rodda, about a year and a half after that conference, considered the money to be peculated. And according to this pamphlet, it must have been lost or peculated, while in Mr. Bradburn’s possession. This is not a forced inference, but what naturally arises from reading the two pamphlets together. My charity would have been called ‘pure malice,’ had I brought a charge so close to any brother of such a nature.

5. Mr. R——’s case is brought up again. Mr. Dawson seems very tenacious of his honour. I have already stated this subject in the trial, and shall only add here,

1. That he has forgotten to inform us, that the horse Mr. R—— bought, was left in his hands for sale, by Mr. Gates, his brother-in-law, a travelling preacher.

2. That when Mr. R—— went there, he prevailed on him to buy his brother’s horse, at a price which many of the friends thought far too high.

3. I repeat again, ' If I mistook in a trivial circumstance, it was owing to the information I had at the Newcastle district meeting from two respectable preachers.' Mr. Dawson, after conversing with one of them, did not by any means prevail on him to deny, that the subject was named in the district meeting, in the manner I have published.—Mr. Hunter declared many things exceedingly severe of Mr. R—— which he knew to be facts, as he had followed him in the circuit where he had travelled. And he was one that mentioned the account as I at first published it.—I do not attempt to throw ' the guilt of lying ' upon these persons. It was worthy of no such name.

4. Mr. Dawson appeared satisfied with my letter, as two persons witnessed to his face when I was in his presence.—The friend that he says, ' was only asked the night before,' had mentioned the circumstance before that time, which was the reason of the question being proposed to him then. Is it generous in Mr. Dawson to attempt to invalidate the testimony of a respectable person, because he would not declare against what he had heard him mention?

5. If Mr. Dawson had not been satisfied when I spoke with him on my way to the conference, why did he not declare it, when we conversed together on the subject?

Mr. Benson lets loose upon the subject: He says, ' this benevolent man must be an avowed opposer of tale-bearing, backbiting, and slandering the innocent, &c.' When I said, every person capable of judging will be able to discern how far this (his being an avowed opposer of my measures) might influence him in writing. Mr. B—— on this is very warm. He says, ' Influence him—what to do? to tell a direct and wilful lie. All that are acquainted with Mr. D—— and his approved veracity, will be able to discern what a vile and groundless insinuation this is.' This is Mr. Benson's rhetoric; and if he were not thus to ease his mind occasionally, he would not know how to get forward.

Mr. Benson says, ' But you will observe, that the principal thing the conference blamed Mr. K—— for, respecting Mr. R——, was, his endeavouring to reproach the body, by bringing up the character of one they had some time before suspended, and concealing from the world the circumstance of his suspension. ' But I did not know this circumstance (says he) till after I had published the account.'



count.' No! This is very extraordinary indeed! He did not know that one of his brethren was suspended by the conference for misconduct! A fit person indeed to write about their affairs!

In my account of the trial we have these words, which Mr. Benson seems to have overlooked:—'After his case had been considered in the Manchester Conference, and a number of preachers pleaded for his expulsion, he was continued, and his name put down for many circuits before he was fixed for Barnardcastle. When the people in that place, who knew his character, knew of his appointment, they sent a letter to the conference, declaring they would not receive him. The letter reached Manchester, when many of us had left the conference, and it was then that he was suspended. The people in Barnardcastle in effect suspended him. I did not know but he was sent to that place by the conference, [Does not his name stand on the minutes for it in 1795?] and rejected by the people, till after I had published the account. And my knowing he was suspended by the influence of that society, did not alter the case in favour of the conference.'

If Mr. Benson and his brethren, had acted as fair opponents, they would have controverted this passage in my trial. This would have carried more conviction than exclaiming, 'He did not know that one of his brethren was suspended by the conference for misconduct! A fit person indeed to write about their affairs!'

It is possible for the persons in Ripon, who are my '*friends* and abettors,' once to have been favourable to Mr. R——; is this any disparagement to their character? Should they continue his '*friends* and abettors,' if they know him to be living in sin, or acting contrary to the gospel? then they might be reflected on. But I hope that they will not be abettors to any, whom they have reason to believe are not living godly in Christ Jesus.

Had not Mr. Benson better come forward openly, and attack the Leeds friends by name, than do it covertly, in the following words? 'An instance this, similar to one at Leeds. For the friends and abettors of a certain character there, excluded in like manner for bad behaviour, have been some of the foremost to aid and support Mr. K—— in opposing the conference, because he says, they have kept persons in connexion guilty of misconduct!! Such is

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their consistency, and their deep concern for the purity, discipline, and good order of the body ! !

1. Several of the society in Leeds, were friendly to Mr. Thoresby, and perhaps to this day think his guilt not equal to his punishment.

2. They were his ' friends and abettors,' while they thought it right in the sight of God ; but no person can charge those that favour me, in general, with separating from the society on his account or on mine.

3. I apprehend, the persons Mr. Benson calls my ' friends and abettors,' in Leeds, are as pious and as great lovers of ' purity, discipline, and good order,' as any persons in that society.

4. They by no means wish to keep persons in the society guilty of misconduct, or preachers of this description in the connexion ; but they wish every person to have a fair trial, and nothing to be done through strife or partiality.

5. Are they my abettors ' because I oppose the conference, and say they have kept persons in the connexion, guilty of misconduct ?' Is there nothing else in what I have written that leads them to be my friends but these two things ?

6. Is there any inconsistency in their being friendly to me, and their deep concern for ' purity, discipline, and good order in the body ?' Does Mr. Benson suppose, that four notes of admiration on this passage, are a sure proof of the reason and good sense it contains ? Is it not amazingly strange, that he and his brethren, should be angry at the people in any place befriending me, under a conviction that I have been injured, and that the cause I am pleading, is for the welfare of our people ?

6. Another ' instance of misrepresentation, is in the case of that brother whom the conference declared to be most honourably acquitted.' I shall insert here, the remarks circulated in a letter, soon after their pamphlet appeared.

In the 16th, 17th, and 18th pages, they represent me as a *mere swindler*, in selling my mare for 14l. to Mr. G——. When the whole affair was examined in the conference, Mr. G—— begged they would not publish any thing on the subject. He said, I had not charged him with swindling, but had only said several persons considered it as a species of swindling. When the conference published the account, concealing his name, I purposely concealed mine, that he  
might

might have no room to reflect on me, respecting this matter. It was not from fear of the people knowing that I sold him the mare. This transaction will bear the light of the strictest examination. Heaven and earth can witness to the truth of the following particulars:

1. A fine blood mare, belonging to one of our friends in Lincolnshire, when she was breaking, took a fright in a market-place, fell down, and broke her knees: having her at a bad farrier's, he applied what prevented the hair from growing, which was a very great loss to him: she had the appearance, by her knees, of coming down: and as she was a young mare, this was exceedingly against the sale of her. He suffered me to ride her a month on trial, and as I was just coming out to travel, and had my horse to buy, without any help from the people, he kindly let me have her for eight pounds. He considered it almost as giving her away: as she would have sold for more than twenty pounds, cheap as horses then were, had she been sound.

2. I rode her for several years—she was very sure footed, and one of the best mares that ever was saddled, as our friends can testify, in the circuits where I have travelled.

3. Though she lost an eye while she was mine, yet her usefulness was not hindered by it. If she had been sound at the time when I parted with her, she was worth upwards of thirty pounds.

4. Mr. G—— rode her a year with me in Newcastle.—He once rode her from *Sunderland* to Newcastle in an hour, which is thirteen miles, and hilly road.

5. When it was fixed for me to go into Scotland, he offered me 14l. for her of his own accord. We mutually agreed upon deferring the business, till we should meet in Northumberland, and consult our friends. After he had advised with the friends, and considered on the price for a month, he determined to have her. I urged him to nothing else, but either to resolve on having her or not, that I might dispose of her before I left England.

6. A farmer in the neighbourhood of Newcastle, was very fond of her: He declared she was well worth that money: And if words have any meaning, he wished to have her, if Mr. G—— refused.

7. I appeal to every reasonable person, if any thing could be fairer than this conduct? The price was of his



*own fixing*, after he had rode her better than a year, and was agreed on after he had consulted his friends. If I had received her as a gift, nothing could be more equitable than my conduct in disposing of her. And so far from 'constraining the circuit-steward to give me the extra-money,' one of them generously advanced it, determining I should not go into Scotland without it.

1. When I parted with the mare, she was sound in all her feet. She was gently rode, and well looked after when she was mine. Six miles an hour was the pace I travelled, when on a journey; but nothing like that pace when I supplied the circuit, unless in particular cases.

2. Mr. G—— had her near three years *in his own hands*, after I went into Scotland, before he parted with her. Two of those years he praised her as one of the best mares in the world. And when, by unmerciful riding, she was laid up, he still spoke highly of her.

3. So far from those words being true, 'nor could he, after seeking to sell her, for several months, get more offered for her than 3l. 10s.' Mr. S. Gardener gave him 5l. for her; and while she was his he got her covered. When Mr. Embleton informed Mr. G——, that he had sold her far too cheap, and offered him 7l. for her, Mr. Gardener generously gave her up. She soon was able to travel after Mr. Embleton had bought her; and a little before the last conference, he was so fond of her, as a breeding mare, that he would not have taken twenty guineas for her and her foal.

4. The mare Mr. G—— sold, was never valued, by any person capable of forming a proper judgment, for any thing like 13l. Eleven pounds were her full value.—— Mr. Emmet, who bought her, soon parted with her in exchange, either at the price he gave, or for less.

5. It is well known, that the friends were invited from all parts of the circuit to the quarterly meeting, that he might have the subject brought forward; and saying, Mr. G—— 'had no *knowledge or intention* of any thing of the kind,' is a very bold assertion.

6. I still maintain, that Mr. G—— ought to have told his friends, that he had received a balance of 3l. 17s. towards the 7l. he lost by the mare; otherwise he ought to have returned that balance to the Newcastle circuit stewards.

7. It was *his concealing this sum* that caused several friends to reflect on him.

8. I appeal to the circuits where he travelled, whether Mr. G——— ‘expended near 2l. out of his own little property,’ upon the mare? Did not the circuits pay the farrying bill, &c.? Upon the whole, I neither ‘*out-witted*,’ nor swindled this brother out of his property.—And had I done this in reality, it is out of the power of any man, or number of men, to justify Mr. G——— in *concealing the balance* mentioned above, unless he had returned it to the Newcastle friends. The candid and impartial will be able to judge how far he ‘*was most honourably acquitted by the conference*.’

It would be easy to apply a number of epithets here, to the persons that have accused me. This account is published from hearsay evidence.—It misrepresents the whole affair.—It slanders my character unjustly.—It is designed to make me odious to the people. I will, however, only quote their own words:—‘Oh, Brethren!—but I spare them. God be merciful to them!—For if detraction, slander, and false accusations be sins, they are sinners indeed.’

7. They say, ‘it would be endless to point out all the instances of misrepresentation that occur in his pamphlet. The allowance (he states, London Bull, page 18.) for preachers and their families, *granted everywhere, without respect to age, abilities, or usefulness*, is 107l. 10s. per annum.’ Is this a fair representation of what I published in the London Bull? By this quotation the reader is informed, that I have declared, ‘the allowance for preachers and their families is 107l. 10s.’ If they had quoted the following words, the matter would not have been a mystery. But they knew it would not answer their purpose. They could not then have wrought upon the passions of the people.—These are my words: ‘I will make the account for a preacher, with a wife, and four children, intreating the reader to observe, that our allowance is in proportion to the number of our family, throughout all our circuits.’ This account is made for a preacher with a wife and four children. Let the stewards where Messrs. Benson, Pawson, and Mather are travelling be asked, if they have for twelve years past supported a preacher, with a wife and four children, for any thing like this sum. I apprehend, in many places,

places, the people could bring an account near double what I have mentioned, for the family alluded to. I rated the preachers board at the price it costs the connexion.— And any person acquainted with our affairs is conscious, that when the preacher is from home, he costs the people in general, more than one shilling and sixpence a day.— It is true, this does not, in many circuits, go in hard money to the family; perhaps not half of it; but in other circuits it does. For where there are two preachers, it often happens, that the young man boards with the family, and the allowance goes regularly on every week. Why does Mr. Benson attack the subject as though I had said, ‘every preacher and his family have 107l. 10s. per annum?’ Why does he overlook what I have said, ‘that our allowance is in proportion to the number of our family, *throughout all our circuits?*’

If a preacher have no wife or children, he has no allowance for them. If he have not a boy at Kingwood-school, the connexion has nothing to expend on that account.— They say, ‘I make house-rent, furniture, letters, and turnpikes, a pretty handsome sum.’ What is the sum I have put down for house rent, coal and candles, letters, turnpikes, and furniture? *Seventeen pounds ten shillings.* Is this half as much, as what Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Benson cost the connexion, in these particulars? I appeal to the different circuits, whether or not, my account upon the whole is exaggerated. And though in the single instance of board, as it refers to many circuits, the preacher may not have the money paid in cash, yet I maintain, that he costs the connexion the sum I have named. And as it refers to a number of circuits, this money is received weekly by the family.

They say, ‘but what will you think when he comes forward a second time, and tells you, (page 50 of his Trial) ‘that the income of those that are in rich circuits is near double what many preachers have that are in small, poor circuits, where they are but little at home;’ and, that ‘there is as much difference between their circumstances and those of their brethren in other places, as there is between many rectors and poor curates.’ What can you think if you believe him, but that of consequence some of us have, at least, 200l.? Now we ask not, is this true? But is it any thing like true? Nay, is there a *shadow* of



truth in it? We affirm there is not. Their income near double what many preachers have that are in poor circuits! Most extraordinary! The truth is, that all the material difference between one circuit and another is, 1. That in some circuits a little more, perhaps a pound or two a year, is allowed for a servant than in others. 2. In some, perhaps, in four or five in the whole connexion, a little more is allowed for the preachers' cloaths, and books, than in others, viz. twelve pounds twelve shillings, or sixteen pounds, instead of the common allowance, which is only twelve pounds per annum. 3. In some circuits where, as he says, the preachers are more at home, they receive more of course for their board than in others, where they are chiefly in the country. But we may venture to assert, that the difference between one circuit and another, even if these particulars be all included, seldom amount in advantage, to above ten or twelve pounds per annum, and very rarely to so much. And is this an income double to what the preachers have in poor circuits? I have quoted this passage at full length, that the reader may examine it carefully, and not be misled by appearances.

I shall state facts, and leave the candid to judge, whether I am farther from the truth than these worthy fathers.—The calculation shall be between Liverpool and Hexham. The married preachers in the former place have the allowance regularly every week; in the latter place, the preacher is three nights (we will say four) at home in a month.

### LIVERPOOL.

	£.	s.	d.
1. Board, at 15s. per week,	39	0	0
2. Quarterage, himself and wife,	25	4	0
3. Servant's wages,	12	12	0
4. Travelling expences; but hardly ever goes from home,	2	2	0
House-rent, coal, and candle, Mr. Moore, for one year,			
	30	16	0

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£ 109 14 0  
HEXHAM.

## HEXHAM.

£. S. D.

1. Four nights per month, at 1s. 6d. per night,	3	18	0
2. Quarterage, man and wife,	24	0	0
3. Servant's wages,	6	0	0
4. Travelling expences—all, or most consumed— ed—not more in hand than	}	0	10 0
House-rent, coal, and candle,		16	0 0
		<hr/>	
		£	50 8 0

You may charge what you think proper for the 45 weeks he is from home in the year.

If the preacher were at home these 45 weeks, as he would be, were he in Liverpool, it would be a great advantage to his family at 1s. 6d. per night. It frequently happens, that preachers in the best circuits have property of their own to a considerable amount; and yet, many of them receive from the connexion, the same yearly allowance, as though they had nothing.

Added to this, in large towns they frequently dine from home, have presents in money, and in apparel, to a considerable amount, which brings their yearly income to near, if not more than double what it is at Hexham, and many other circuits. I am bold to aver, that my assertion is 'something like true;' and that when these worthy fathers ask, 'Is there a shadow of truth in it?' It may be answered—there is. It is perhaps as near the truth, as any calculation could be, without fully examining the particulars. They may cry out, 'Most extraordinary!' And multiply notes of admiration to ornament their work, but this does not alter the case. And when they say, 'ten or twelve pounds per annum, is the only difference,' or words to that effect, their assertion, when fairly examined, is found far short of the real difference. This is self evident to those who will stoop to examine the subject, as it refers to Liverpool, and several other circuits.

8. 'One more instance of misrepresentation we will point out? 'Mr. Mather (he says, Trial, page 25.) was greatly displeased at the Manchester Conference, when he heard of the paper signed by 57 preachers, requesting that all our laws might be made so explicit, that none of them might be

be capable of a double meaning. Mr. M—— rose up, declaring he would leave the connexion; that is, he would rather leave the connexion than agree to have the laws made explicit!! Now, we ask, was this the fact? Is there a preacher in the connexion, who was present at the time, that will say it was a fact? We apprehend not. The plain fact was, Mr. M—— stood up because Mr. Kilham affirmed, that 'our laws were revolutionary,' and must be always changing, meaning, especially, the plan of pacification, &c.' Nothing can be more contrary to matter of fact than this.

1. When the rules of pacification were first read, I said they were better than we supposed they would be, and if we considered them as revolutionary, they were more tolerable than might have been expected. Mr. Mather then stood up, and attacked the word 'revolutionary' with a great deal of warmth. But this is not the time I allude to.

2. A committee of the preachers met the trustees, and had a long conversation with them, after the debate in the conference upon the word named above. And it was after that meeting that the word *separation* was agitated in the conference.

3. When the leading preachers declared, whatever number left us it was no separation, unless they had a preacher at their head, several of us requested they would publish, honestly, their exposition of the word.

4. When they refused, I drew up a paper (which will be inserted by and by) protesting against having rules to mean one thing to ourselves, and another to the people.— This paper was signed by 57 preachers, and given to Mr. Bradford.

5. A preacher or preachers clamoured against the paper to Mr. Bradford, and he being president, ungenerously destroyed it before it was read in full conference.

6. When we returned one day from dinner, Mr. Mather having heard of the paper, was exceedingly warm. He cried out loudly against our measures. He carried matters so far, as to declare he would leave us. In the conflict he was so irritated, as to be obliged to sit down, and pant for breath.

7. Whether Mr. Mather declared he would leave us, because the laws were required in the paper to be made explicit, or not, it was on account of that very paper, that he made use of this declaration. And whatever Mr. Benson,

&c.



&c. may say to the contrary, I appeal to the preachers who were present, that it was at the time I have stated, Mr. M—— proposed leaving us, and not at the time a dispute took place upon the word revolutionary. Five notes of admiration, are not sufficient to make this point clear beyond contradiction.

8. I am conscious, that several of the preachers in the meeting after my expulsion, declared, that there were different things in the plan, they were as much averse to as I could be.

1. I offered to be subject to them, as far as they were consistent with the scriptures.

2. But when I refused to comply in all the senses Mr. Bradburn mentioned, they considered this as sufficient to refuse all farther terms of reconciliation. 3. As most of the preachers do not approve of several things in the pacific plan, would it not have been as easy for me to have continued in the connexion as them, when I offered to comply with all the rules of that plan, as far as they are consistent with the scriptures? (See the 45th page of my Trial before the Conference.)

As an argument for my expulsion, they insinuate, that my sentiments on religion and politics have differed from theirs; 'Many of us have long known, that his sentiments are not the same with ours on some points of great importance; and points which we are well assured, our people in general would judge *fundamental*, &c. But when he has with unwearied diligence promulgated from the pulpit and the press, opinions *inimical to*, and destructive of the plan of discipline, not to say doctrine also—translated many valuable and important characters, and asserted things which he is not able to prove, to the great disquiet of the whole connexion, we have no alternative but to put him from us.'

If I have the right of private judgment, so long as this does not interfere with any thing important in Methodism, this privilege may be enjoyed by me. But so far from ever uttering a sentence against the doctrines, considered as fundamental, I have preached them with as much clearness as my ability would admit of. And I think, those who know me are convinced, if I thought any doctrine more important, I have honesty enough to avow my sentiments. On speculative doctrines, not essential to salvation, we may think

think different from each other. I never made any \* assistant preacher a promise, ' not to promulgate these sentiments, either from the pulpit or the press, or even in pri-

The following Letter was published in the Manchester Gazette, on Dec. 10, 1796. The Author is unknown to us, or the Printers.

*Messrs. Cowdroy and Boden.*

Gentlemen,

Please to insert the following passage in your useful paper, as a proof that intractious of religious liberty are not peculiar to one single party; but that *even those who depend upon a toleration* for the liberty they enjoy, are capable of making such attempts on that of others, as are both inconsistent with the best ideas of religious liberty, and destructive of that exclusive allegiance which is due to JESUS, the only Legislator in the christian church, to whom an unreserved and universal obedience is commanded to be paid:

"Mr. K——'s of right private judgment no man wishes to invade. He might have THOUGHT for himself in these instances, as he had long done respecting some others of no small moment, both in religion and politics. Many of us have long known that his sentiments are not the same with our's, on some points of great importance, and points which, we are all assured, our people in general would think fundamental. Nevertheless, on his promise, made to his assistant, *not to promulge* these sentiments, either from the pulpit or the press, or even in PRIVATE CONVERSATION, and that he would not RECOMMEND or SPREAD the BOOKS *published in support* of them, we have BORE with him, and SUFFERED him to labour with us till now." [Vide Defence of the Conduct of the Conference in the Expulsion of A. Kilham, page 21, 22.]

The pamphlet from which the above passage is taken, has the signatures of Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Benson; who, it seems, are some of the most eminent preachers among the Methodists.

It is not my design to interest myself at all in the controversy between these gentlemen and Mr. K——, who is represented as having made so weak and injudicious a promise. I would only observe, that as no church, excepting that of Rome, ever advanced so unjust and exorbitant a claim; every friend to the rights of conscience, cannot but sincerely wish, that these gentlemen would have considered the meaning and tendency of such expressions, before they ventured to adopt sentiments, or indulge themselves in practices, which, were they (as they might with equal justice) to be turned against them, could not but excite the heaviest complaints of cruelty, oppression, and PERSECUTION.

PHILELEUTHERUS.

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vate conversation, and that he would not recommend or spread the books published in support of them.' I should consider myself a *slave*, under the name of a Methodist preacher, were I to make such an abject promise to any assistant. The books alluded to, are Winchester's Dialogues and his Lectures, with other publications of the same nature, upon the universal restitution of all things.

Previous to my expulsion, I never made the pulpit a place to name the subjects in, which are agitated among us. I think it degrading to the ministry to make sermons on controverted points, either of doctrine or discipline. If a man have any thing to say on these subjects, let him do it after the sermon, or from the press. The latter is preferable. It is the way I pursued, previous to my expulsion. To say, that I have 'traduced many valuable and important characters,' without proving it, cannot satisfy the impartial. I deny the charge, and will meet any man upon the face of my pamphlets, and controvert this point with him. If any great and good characters have grasped after undue power and influence in our connexion, exposing themselves to censure, this cannot be justly called traducing their characters. They ask, in the same paragraph, 'judge, brethren, can we, on any principle of religion, morality, prudence or common sense, continue to give the right-hand of fellowship to such a one?'—— If religion, morality, prudence, and common sense, required my expulsion, it would have been highly criminal to have continued me in the connexion. Is this the language of men acting under the influence of the Spirit of God, or is it similar to what Rome made use of, when father Martin Luther was excommunicated?

They add, 'Besides, can any candid man blame us for choosing to whom we will give the right-hand of fellowship, or with whom we will labour in our Lord's vineyard?—— Are not we, as well as others, to be allowed the right of common Englishmen, the right of judging for ourselves in a matter of such moment. But we have not convinced him that he is in an error.—No! nor has he convinced us.—We therefore leave him to follow his way, and we will follow our's.'

If I had been a member of the conference, unconnected with the people, this language might have passed. But when it is remembered, that I was united to the body at large,



large, had they a right to expel me without their knowledge or consent? Does not this passage speak the people and preachers two distinct bodies? Does the choice of fellow-labourers rest solely with the preachers, or have the people a right to be heard on this subject? Is it the right of Englishmen to try, cast, condemn, and expel, when the accusers are judge and jury? or is this the right of Rome? As the people are not consulted on this head, nor heard, when they come forward to plead for a proper share in the choice and expulsion of their ministers, their state resembles the members of the church of Rome, more than that of Jesus Christ.

Hear the language of these fathers on this subject.—But ‘who is to judge in this case? The preachers, or a jury of the people? Judge, in *what* case. In connection with whom we are to labour in the Lord’s vineyard? Can any one ask such a question as this in the land of liberty? &c.’ Here they spurn the very idea of the people having a right to be a jury in the case of a preacher, who offends the conference. When they accuse they must be judges and jury also, and have a secret trial, otherwise their interests and the people’s would be united, and this would bring Methodism on a level with christianity in this matter.—Can any one ask such questions as these ‘in this land of liberty?’ Must not a man suppose himself at Rome, before he dare ask, Whether or not a Methodist preacher is to be secretly examined in a district meeting, and in the conference, and not to be allowed the common rights of Englishmen? To be tried, cast, and condemned there, by his accusers, resembles Rome, because he had the courage to take away the veil, and give the people to understand, how their confidence has been abused in a number of instances. Surely the right-hand of fellowship could not be continued by those who determine to keep our friends in the dark, and to hide from their view a number of things, which they have a right to be acquainted with!

They add, ‘But many of the people are of his mind, both that his trial was not fair, and that his plan ought to be adopted.’ Certainly they have a right to think so, and prefer his single testimony to that of 150, if they choose, and even to withdraw from us, and unite with him.—But let them remember, it is *they* that change, and not *we*. We remain still on the old ground, &c.’

When

When my single testimony brings facts before the people, on which they are capable of judging, it may have as much weight as the testimony of a thousand. Because the matter does not rest upon the number of persons that bear witness to it, but upon the facts which are adduced.—What the conference and I have published respecting my trial, rests solely on the facts we relate, that they are privy to, and not upon our bare testimony. If the friends are not aware of this, they may be led to suppose, that 150 ought to be believed sooner than one. Only carefully distinguish between facts that must be judged of by the people, and testimony, and then you will see that one is as good as ten thousand. For instance, suppose a person should declare the sun shines; and were an hundred and fifty to deny it, you would examine the subject, and make up your judgment accordingly. If upon examination, you found the sun did shine, you would prefer the testimony of one to an hundred and fifty.

What do they mean by 'the old ground?' Do they suppose that the plan now pursued is the same with that which was established from the beginning? Did the preachers then assume as much power and consequence as they do now?—Were they as expensive to the people?—Did they travel as little then, and act as much like gentlemen, as the preachers do now?—Had they the *golden rules* of the preachers' fund then, in such worldly perfection as they are now?

The name of 'old ground' remains, but where is the preacher that has it so often in his lips, that would wish to tread it, as the preachers did thirty or forty years ago? It is because the old ground is forsaken in a great measure, that we complain. And yet we are represented, as evil affected towards the preachers, striving to make the people to come forward and overturn or change the whole system of Methodism, 'both in doctrine and discipline.'—All this is said with a design to keep the people from examining matters, lest the power and influence of a few leading preachers should be broken. We have reason to be thankful, that these schemes are too apparent. They are seen through by the sensible part of our community. Others are opening their eyes, and seeking after knowledge—such knowledge as ought to be found in the hearts of all that are desirous of prospering in Methodism.

There

There is a curious passage, which I will just notice, upon this head :—‘ If we speak strictly, we do not so much expel him, as he leaves us.’

This is worthy of being debated in the conference. It is similar to their debating upon this point, ‘ Whether I was trying them, or they were trying me.’ If this be logic among a few preachers, it is not the logic of the body of preachers, nor of the people in general. Suppose a number of criminals were tried, cast, and condemned ; if these criminals were forced on board a ship, and sent to Botany Bay, should any grave judge, with all the seriousness belonging to his office, declare, ‘ We do not so much expel them, as they leave us,’ would the people be able to keep their gravity ? If I, however, smile at such language as this, I am published through the nation as a mere trifler, and many prayers are offered to heaven for my conversion.

They add, ‘ Perhaps you may wonder, why we bring doctrine here, as well as discipline. But is there not a cause ? Have we not reason to apprehend that he has it as much at heart to change *this* as the *other* ? [Page 24, of his ‘ Progress of Liberty ;’] he says, ‘ Would it not be necessary to examine that clause in our deeds, which requires every preacher to conform in his preaching to the doctrine contained in Mr. Wesley’s Notes on the New Testament, and his four volumes of sermons. If the conference were to publish the Notes on the New Testament, and the four volumes of sermons, desiring the opinion of our people upon these throughout the connexion, and then make *the alterations which are considered necessary by the PEOPLE*, it would be to the honour and advantage of our cause.’——Here, it is not only intimated that the doctrine in the notes and sermons, is in some respect erroneous, but the judgment of the people, as to this matter, is exalted above the judgment of the preachers, yea, and above Mr. Wesley himself, &c. &c. &c.’——To shew how unjustly the subject is represented, I will quote the passage they allude to :——

‘ To lay a proper foundation, would it not be necessary, for the rules of our societies and bands, to be carefully examined ; and in some parts either altered or explained, that they may give no offence to the unprejudiced ?

And



And as there are a number of minutes, containing rules, both for the people and ourselves, in the yearly minutes of the conference, would it not be right to collect these into a pamphlet, and determine which of them are binding, and which of them have lost their influence? As they lie buried at present, many of them are forgotten, which are of great importance; and others continue as laws, which we can never think are binding upon us now. Would it not be necessary to examine the large minutes of the conference, and either determine to keep those rules that are binding sacred, otherwise let them be expunged? And let every thing that is indifferent be explained or laid aside, that our people may not reproach us, for having rules which we never attend to? Would it not be necessary to examine that clause in our deeds, which requires every preacher to conform in his preaching, to the doctrines contained in Mr. Wesley's Notes on the New Testament, and his four volumes of sermons? Is there nothing in the Notes or in the Sermons that militates against the scriptures, 'which are the only sufficient rule of our faith and practice?' The Papists are required to receive the doctrines which are taught by their priests, without examining them by the word of God. Every member of the church of England, is to receive the scriptures, as they are explained by the church. And every Methodist preacher is to mould his doctrines according to the Notes and Sermons of Mr. Wesley. If the conference were to collect all the private rules published in the yearly minutes—the class and band rules—the large minutes—the Notes on the New Testament—and the four volumes of Sermons, desiring the opinion of our people upon them throughout the connexion, and then make the alterations which are considered necessary by the people at large, it would be to the honour and advantage of our cause. It would lead our friends to examine our doctrines—a thing which thousands of them have never yet done, and to compare them with the scriptures of truth. The leaders could easily collect the sense of the people upon every subject; and it could be brought regularly through leaders', quarterly, and district meetings to the conference. I expect to be reproached for hinting at this; but am conscious, it would be abundantly better for our people to know the doctrines we hold, than to go forward in *that ignorance*, which cannot be for their happiness.

pinefs. And would it not be for the honour of their character, to prove all things belonging to Methodism, and only hold fast that which is good, both for their faith and practice ?

I have given the passage as it stands in the Progress of Liberty. Will any thing belonging to Methodism suffer, by being fairly examined ? If there are laws and rules in the Minutes that are never thought of ; and others that are a reproach to our connexion, would there be any harm in laying them aside ? And were our people to examine the Notes on the New Testament, and the four volumes of Sermons, would they lose any thing by examination ?— There are certain doctrines which the Methodists hold, and which Mr. Wesley was particularly warm in defending.— But if in his own Sermons and Notes there are expressions or sentences, which militate against his avowed opinions in other places, would it not be well to lay them aside.— Is the sermon called ‘ The Almost Christian,’ exactly according to the scriptures ? Are there no expressions in the sermon called ‘ The Lord our Righteousness,’ that speak of Christ’s own personal righteousness being imputed to us ? A doctrine which he objected to in many parts of his works.— Are there no passages in the sermon on Rom. viii. 1. which border upon Antinomianism !— And are there not several places in the Notes, and in the Sermons, which if taken in their literal sense, militate against the doctrines Mr. Wesley held ? Have not his Calvinist opponents availed themselves of these passages, and fought our venerable father, with his own words ?

In regard to the yearly and large Minutes, the class and band rules, there are so many things in them which do not refer to doctrine, that are either never thought of, or only considered as laughable, that, in my judgment, it would be better to revise and alter, than suffer our connexion to be reproached so very justly by continuing them ? Were the people requested to examine every thing I mentioned, and could point out in leaders’, quarterly, and district meetings, any thing that militates against the scriptures, or the avowed doctrines of Methodism, would there be any harm in laying them aside ? Would it not be for the glory of God, and the advantage of our cause, to do it ?

These

These worthy fathers attempt to make this ridiculous by saying, 'class meetings, quarterly and district meetings, would be turned into disputing clubs—neither preachers nor leaders would be allowed to know or judge for themselves, what doctrine they are to teach and believe, but are to be directed by the majority of the people in these particulars. Here you have one *pretty remarkable specimen* and *prominent feature* of his plan, &c.' Pray, what has all this to do with my plan? It is a shadow they are attacking, to amuse themselves, and to keep the people from having right views of the subject. It is impossible, without torturing the passage, to make it declare, that according to my plan, 'himself, and all his brethren in the ministry, should refer their doctrines to the discussion, and determination of their hearers, and should alter it from time to time, at their will and pleasure. A proposition, so extravagant and ridiculous, that no person would possibly have made it, who had any proper knowledge of the gospel of Christ, or of human nature, or the *uprightness, disinterestedness, fidelity, and courage* essential to the character of a *minister of Christ*, and *steward of the mysteries of God*.' This 'extravagant proposition,' is not mine. It is raised up by Mr. Benson to attack and conquer. Nothing I have said leads to such an absurdity. How easy it is, by putting our own ideas to a subject, to make it ridiculous, and then to blame our opponent for it. This has been the conduct of my worthy fathers in this place.

It appears, my ignorance is conspicuous in the passage they have been attacking: but more especially, in placing the head of a furious animal, at the top of the London Bull. If the Pope's 'edicts were called bulls, because they were given under his bulla or seal,' was not the edict sent to arrest me, given under the hand and seal of ten preachers? And was not the figure emblematical? Did not this Methodistical Bull foam with fury and rage against me? Was not its horns designed to push me out of the connexion!

They say, 'as to impudence, there needs no other proof of this, than his audacious treatment of the memory of Mr. Wesley; and his *repeated and ungrounded* attacks on so many of his fathers and brethren, whose characters have been irreprehensible and venerable for above half a century.' Pray have I, or these worthy fathers, treated Mr.



Wesley's memory with the greatest audaciousness? They have represented him dying insolvent—published that they have had his debts to pay, out of the preachers' fund money, when they know in their consciences, he left five or six thousand pounds more in book-stock, to help the connexion with, than paid his legacies. I have not 'by repeated and ungrounded attacks,' injured my fathers and brethren. This cannot be fairly proved from any thing I have written.

They say, 'He has been guilty of *breach of trust*, and that in a matter of the greatest importance, in that, as this Address demonstrates, he has *deceived the confidence* reposed in him by Mr. Wesley and the brethren, and has violated the engagements entered into at his admission, and at the conference after Mr. Wesley's death.

At the time of my trial, breach of trust was confined to my publishing an extract, in the title page of the London Bull, from a private letter written by Dr. Coke.—But when the Doctor became my warm opposer, the preachers could not make this a crime, as the letter was not of a nature that required secrecy. I am now charged with deceiving the confidence of Mr. Wesley. Was I not subject to Mr. Wesley, not for wrath, but for conscience sake, while he lived? And though I am represented as 'lying still, for obvious reasons,' during his life, I can assure the reader, had I then seen things in the same light as I do now, nothing would have restrained my pen. But the principal grievances we complain of, are those which have been manifest since his death. I have neither directly nor indirectly deceived the confidence of that great man. It appears, that these worthy fathers consider, if they can only drag his name into the dispute, it will supply the want of a number of arguments. It is become so very common now, that the people are not capable of being imposed on by it. When I agreed to follow the plan Mr. Wesley left us at his death, it was with the purest motives. As that plan requires us to follow the openings of divine providence, I trust, this has been my endeavour, since the year 1791.

If the fathers and brethren of that conference imagined I should not venture to oppose any measure that they might be kind enough to establish, my agreeing to follow the plan left us by Mr. Wesley, by no means required this at  
my

my hand. As an honest man, I had a right to point out to our people, the evils that threaten their destruction, and to call upon them to come forward, and help in having them removed. I have deceived the confidence of no man, in writing upon the evils that are found in our body. I know many persons think it singular, that the only travelling preacher, that ever came from Epworth, the place where Messrs. Wesleys were born, should come forward and point out a number of evils which are found in our body, and propose a radical cure. They consider the same fountain as sending forth bitter and sweet waters.—Whatever may be thought by some on this subject, I consider it an honour to be born in the same town that gave birth to Messrs. Wesleys, and I hope I have been following the leadings of divine providence in my contracted sphere, in what I have done to bring about a redress of grievances, as Messrs. Wesleys did when they sought to reform the national church. And as they rejoiced when they were worthy to be cast out of the church, and went preaching the gospel where a door opened; so I rejoice, that I am counted worthy to be cast out of the conference for what I have done, and hope to preach wherever the Lord directs my way.

They say, ‘As to *L—s*, or uttering *slanders or untruths*, whether he knew them to be such or not, this is also but too amply proved in this publication, as it was also at the conference, before one hundred and fifty witnesses.—If this was proved so well in the conference, why have the preachers refused to publish the account? No person can suppose it was out of tenderness to me, but rather from another cause. If this pamphlet prove me a liar in so many instances, it is a little singular, that they cannot be made out, when their declarations are properly examined.

They say, ‘Some of you, however, are of opinion, that he is sincere, and means well in all the steps he has taken, having no intention of making a division among the people. We confess, we thought so ourselves till lately, and therefore have been the less severe upon him. But we now see cause to alter our judgment, and that for the following reasons :

1. If he be sincere, and believe himself, what he publishes to the world, respecting the *corruption, oppression, and tyrannical nature* of our plan, and the *dishonesty, and knavery*

of our conduct, why does he seek so earnestly to labour in connexion with us, &c.

2. 'If he mean well, and have no intention to make a division in the societies; why does he use such *art* to render himself popular, and attach a party to himself, and that among the trustees and preachers, as well as people, not in the least regarding the strife, contention, and subsequent convulsion this may make in the societies? That he may induce the people to favour him, he compliments them on their good sense, and tells them, 'It is *their* cause he is pleading, and that on that account he is expelled, &c.'—His judgment of the trustees and of their power, you are, some of you at least, no strangers to, &c. What business had he, a young, unexperienced stripling, to meddle either with the trustees at Bristol, or in London, &c.—But it is not among the people and trustees only, but among the preachers also, that he endeavours to gain a party to himself. For this purpose, he labours to excite the envy of the younger preachers against their senior brethren.'—They want to make it out, that in the passages quoted from my pamphlets upon dishonesty, &c. that I most certainly allude to the senior brethren, and them *only*.——'Now can he suppose they are so ignorant, or so thoughtless, as to attach themselves to a man, who thus undeservedly, and without so much as a shadow of a reason, reproaches them? &c. What Mr. K——'s intentions are in all this, we apprehend, is sufficiently apparent. He is manifestly doing his utmost to make divisions; nor can his proceedings, in the nature of things, have any other tendency, &c.'

Upon this passage let us remark, 1. I have not represented the preachers in general, in the *horrid light* this passage holds out. That is, as a 'set of knaves and tyrants.' Do 'I seek earnestly to labour in connexion with the preachers' upon any other ground than a radical reform?—If they would establish a plan, calculated to satisfy the people, and suffer them to know how their own affairs are managed, this would induce me to wish to live and die with them. It is possible for me to 'mean well,' and at the same time, to plead for a redress of grievances. If any thing has made me popular, it is not my 'art,' but the steps the conference, and a few leading preachers since that time, have taken, which have made me so. I can assure the preachers,



preachers, that I am not striving to divide the societies.— I should infinitely prefer an union upon good grounds.— And if that could be established, I would chearfully retire into a private situation, rather than be an hindrance to such an union.

2. I have not basely complimented the people to get them on my side. It is on their account that I suffer, whether the preachers will believe it or not. Had I kept out of their view the evils that are found in the connexion, my plan might have been retained. The sensible part of the connexion see this, and are resolved to take such steps as may convince the leading preachers, that when they act unjustly in expelling one of their body for declaring the truth, they will support the injured, as far as the gospel directs. If these fathers in the gospel, could get the people to take part with them, and not stoop to examine matters, this would lead them to renounce me, and to cease seeking a redress of grievances. But, as good Mr. Pawson says, 'The reign of popery is too far over and gone,' for any thing of this nature to be imposed on the Methodists.

3. Many of the old trustees saw farther than a number of the people. They beheld too much *priestly power and influence*, creeping into our connexion. When a struggle was made to get all the chapels into the hands of the preachers, they dreaded the consequences, and many of them withstood every effort that was made to bring them to adopt the plan that was proposed. Mr. Wesley, from the best of motives, might wish the trustees to give up their power to the conference, but many of the trustees could not be reconciled to this measure, and therefore they refused to comply with the proposal.

2. The trustees in most places, who have opposed the sacrament and the service in church hours, have not done it so much out of *opposition to the people*, as to *check the growing influence* of the preachers. They saw, or thought they saw, priestly pride behind the scheme, and determined to check it in the bud.

3. If the London trustees had followed the most excellent way, perhaps they would not have entered into a law-suit. But the preachers were the moving cause of that suit. They laid the foundation, and the trustees availed themselves of the laws of their country, when they saw their rights invaded. There appears an over-ruling providence

vidence in permitting that suit. As it has *demonstrated*, that all the houses are in the hands of the trustees. They are the guardians of the rights of the people. The preachers have no power over the houses but by the sufferance of the trustees.

4. No persons in the world can justify the conduct of the Newcastle trustees. A second deed was made for the Orphan-house, about twenty years after it was built. This deed was not registered in chancery. Mr. Wesley made a third deed, and appointed trustees, a little before his death. Several of the old trustees were dissatisfied at Mr. Cownley's giving the sacrament at Byker, two miles from Newcastle. One of them, being an attorney, found out that the second deed was not valid, and in consequence of this, the last, which Mr. Wesley made a little before his death, was good for nothing. A gentleman, who was trustee for the first deed, was then alive in London. The attorney and his friends, plotted secretly, got a new deed made, and had it signed over to them, by the gentleman in London. This transaction being ripened, was made known to the people on the 5th of November, 1792. By this measure, two deeds were set aside, and the trustees Mr. Wesley had appointed, were supplanted. Can any person justify the steps which were taken to usurp the trust of the Orphan-house? Have I used too strong expressions on this head, in reprobating that measure?

5. When I opposed the measures of the trustees in London, Bristol, Newcastle, &c. it was because I thought they were acting against the rights and liberties of the people. Undue power, exercised by any part of our body, has been, and still is, the object of my attack. And whatever attempts Mr. Benson uses to make me inconsistent on this head, every impartial reader, on examining my pamphlets, will perceive, that I have invariably opposed, according to my ability, every thing that was calculated, in *either trustees or preachers*, to oppress the people.

6. To prove the truth of this assertion, I shall quote a passage from the Progress of Liberty, upon the subject:—  
 'Preachers, trustees, leaders, and stewards, in a religious point of view, are no more than brethren to the private members. They are more than brethren in one point of view: they are their servants for Christ's sake.—In this sense we dare not call any person our Master, but  
 Christ,

Christ, and we are all brethren in him: this gives every society, let its members be many or few, an unalienable right to worship God as they please. Every society in our connexion has a right to determine, what hours are most suitable for public worship?—where and how the sacrament shall be administered, &c. &c. And a majority in every society ought always to be fairly obtained, before any thing of importance is determined. As no society is so large but it may assemble in the place appointed for public worship, the fairest and most equitable way of knowing the minds of the people, would be by stating the subject properly, not endeavouring to bias their judgment any way, and then leaving them at *full liberty* to vote which way they please.

‘The votes could not be so well collected by the leaders: though in some cases this might be submitted to, when the whole society could not assemble: if the majority should determine for service in church hours—the sacrament of the Lord’s supper—baptism—and burial of the dead, by our own preachers, it would be a sin in the sight of God to hinder them from enjoying their privileges. No trustees, stewards, leaders, or even preachers, could prevent them, without taking the place of Christ, and lording it over God’s heritage. We have all an equal right to vote in these matters, as we are all redeemed by Christ, and have all a soul to save, equally precious in the sight of God, with the souls of our trustee-brethren. The minority have always a right to do as they please: if they can submit, saying, *The will of the Lord be done*, all will be well. If they cannot, they may worship in church hours, receive the sacrament, &c. &c. as they have done: and in every thing else be united to their brethren in the bonds of the gospel. If the conference, a body of trustees, or any person or number of persons, prevent a society from having the privilege of determining these matters, it is *tyranny on their part, and oppression to the people.*’

Had Mr. Benson quoted this passage at full length, he would have placed my sentiments fairly before the people. But taking detached parts from different pamphlets, written on different occasions, and placing them before the people in the manner he has done, is far from acting the part of a fair opponent. If Mr. Benson and his brethren, could work upon the passions of the trustees, and get them  
on



on their side, it would be a great acquisition. But the trustees are wiser than to be led into a snare that would, in the end, prove hurtful to the cause of Methodism.—— I would still advise the people to converse freely with leaders, trustees, and stewards on the subjects alluded to, and they will hear from many of them, such narratives, as will sufficiently convince them, that I have not exaggerated, in the accounts published in my pamphlets.

It is very curious how these worthy fathers can make it out, that all the charges respecting swindling, are only applicable to the young preachers.——I am represented as endeavouring to stir them up to envy the old preachers their situations. Having signed my expulsion at the sacrament table (I mean those that were at the last conference) how can they recede from that act, so necessary for the welfare of the people? They are supposed not to be ‘so ignorant or thoughtless to attach themselves to a man, who has undeservedly, and without so much as the shadow of a reason, reproached them.’ Why do they pursue this way to guard the young preachers? Would not truth prevail on them more than this sophistry? If the young preachers wish to have the confidence of the people, they will not suffer the *golden chain* of the rules of the preachers’ fund, to bind them from thinking and acting as ministers of Christ. Should they join the few that govern, to support their measures, and lose the confidence of the people by it, they may have to grapple with many things, that will prevent their future usefulness. I hope they will look beyond the present year, and consider the state the Methodist connexion may be in, in a few months or years. The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself, while the simple pass on and are punished.

A snare is laid for the preachers throughout the connexion, by a letter from the Manchester district meeting. The following is an exact copy of it:

‘MANCHESTER, Dec. 2, 1796.

‘Very dear Brethren,

“You will see by these minutes, that we have been under the disagreeable necessity of calling a district meeting; at which, among other things, it has been said, that  
some

some assert ' there are many of the preachers who do not approve of the conference rules or laws; nor of the power vested in the conference.'—On this diversity of sentiment, some think our present uneasiness is founded.

' We are of opinion, that this matter ought to be put out of doubt; and therefore we wish you to use what means you think best to get the judgment of every preacher in your district on these two important points. When you have received their unequivocal sentiments, be kind enough to send them to Mr. PAWSON, that when all come to hand, he may publish them to the connexion.

' We are your affectionate Brethren,

' Signed in behalf of the Meeting,

' A. MATHER.

' T. TAYLOR.'

' P. S. We entreat you to do this without delay.'

On this letter let us remark, 1. By what authority do these brethren break the rules of the last conference, in printing and publishing their minutes with this letter?

2. Have they a right to request the preachers to give their ' unequivocal sentiments' upon this subject, before the next conference?—Is not this measure a proof, that a few leading preachers are grasping after dominion over the rest of their brethren?

3. If the preachers comply, what shall they write?—Their own free sentiments, or disguise their views, in words of a double meaning? If they say they approve of all the laws and rules of the conference, and of the power the preachers exercise, will not the people consider them as acting under the influence of a *few men* against their interests? And will not this wean the hearts of sensible people from them? If they write freely upon the subject, will they not give offence to the ruling party? May not this step cause them to be suspected, and be a means of injuring them in future?

4. If Mr. Pawson receive the ' unequivocal sentiments' of the preachers, will he be obliged to publish them?—

Will

Will he not rather be at liberty to circulate those that are the most favourable to his views, and either not mention the others, or do it in a way that will prevent their sentiments from being known?

5. Is it possible for any real good to arise out of this scheme? If the preachers declare themselves of one mind in this matter, and all approve of the rules and laws of the conference, will not sensible people suppose they have entered into a combination against them? Will not this increase jealousy, and hasten division and tumult? If their sentiments considerably vary, will not this be attended with dispute and altercation among themselves? If mutilated accounts of what they write be published, will not this occasion a number of things painful and distressing to the preachers?

6. In whatever light this letter is viewed, it holds out snares to preachers, and is calculated to injure the connexion. It will be happy for those preachers, who take no notice of it, but continue their circuits, without paying undue homage to any number of men, *that may act as a self-created head over them.*

The following is a curious passage:—‘We beg leave to ask, whom they would wish the connexion to be governed by? the *fathers or the children*? If by the fathers, whether by those who have been employed in the work from the beginning, and have had the experience of thirty or forty years, or those, that, like him, are only of yesterday.—But how can these senior brethren, he speaks of, be said to govern the connexion, when it is well known they have wished, for three or four years past, to have a government of some kind established, as a *dernier resort*, in the intervals of conference, but have not been able to obtain it, the younger brethren, who are more in number, always carrying the point against them.’

Upon this passage let us remark, 1. I have shown in a former number, that the present Methodist preachers are not the fathers of the people. Perhaps not of more than one tenth of them. And supposing they were, since the connexion is come to maturity, they have no right to rule without being appointed by the people. The Pope is called papa, or father, and usurps authority over the people at large.—It is a little singular, that Methodist preachers should follow



low popish maxims, and wish, by calling themselves the fathers of the people, to govern them without their consent.

2. These worthy fathers, that have travelled thirty or forty years, consider themselves as qualified to govern, abundantly better than those like me, 'of yesterday,' who have only travelled about twelve years. Fathers generally have a good opinion of their own abilities. Perhaps some that have not travelled half so long, may be as capable of governing as themselves. But who requires rulers and governors in the church, to take the place of Christ, and exercise dominion over the people? As this is extremely unnecessary, so it is absurd, in the highest degree.

Every district may manage its own affairs till the conference return. And to create offices in the church, unknown in the scriptures, is dangerous to vital religion. Jesus Christ says, we have only himself for our Master. We are all brethren.

3. Here we have an open confession, that for three or four years, these worthy fathers have been seeking to establish a government, as 'a dernier resort,' to exercise authority over the preachers and people, from conference to conference. Would they have acknowledged this two years ago? If they have been seeking this, under different forms, it is happy for the connexion that they have not found it. Their younger brethren being more in number, have prevented their designs. We supposed they wanted to reign as princes in our Israel, and therefore prevented the evil.

4. Have not Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Benson for many years, fixed themselves, according to their own pleasure, without the people being consulted? Are they not rich in comparison of many, or most of their brethren? And are there not a number of preachers, equally qualified for large, rich circuits, that have grieved to see themselves slighted or neglected? Cannot these worthy fathers recollect, that many hints of this nature have been thrown out by different preachers, and by the people in many places? If these things have not reached their ears, others have heard complaints of this nature, and been grieved on account of them.

Perhaps there is not a part in the pamphlet, which ought to be more execrated, than the following quotation:

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‘As to his insinuations respecting ourselves, we despise, and should take no notice of them, but for the sake of the people, whose suspicions and prejudices they are intended to excite; we would observe, we care not how much ‘every class of readers,’ whether of Thomas Paine’s or Alexander Kilham’s mushroom-productions, or of the equally *well-meant*, though less noticed efforts of that *pigmy tribe of scribblers*, of which Salford, Ashton, and the neighbourhood have been so prolific of late.—We care not, we say, how much they ‘converse with the trustees, stewards, and leaders of our societies.’ All, we are well assured, save the *professed disciples of Thomas Paine*, will bear witness to the integrity, and upright conduct of the Methodist preachers.—One thing, however, may comfort us, and that is, that there is little likelihood of his drawing off any, but those whose views accord with his own in politics as well as religion, and we are not assured but it will be abundantly best for the whole connexion, that persons of this description should leave us. Some of them having caught Mr. K————’s spirit, and imbibed his *levelling principles*, for some time have been, and, we have reason to believe, would continue to be disturbers of the body, and promoters of strife and contention, and that about matters of no moment, or such as might easily be regulated in another and more peaceable way.’

Upon this passage let us remark, 1. What has our plan to do with the politics of the nation? And why have they dragged in Mr. Paine, but to make the people fear lest we should be dangerous persons to countenance? Is not this attack extremely unkind, not to say unchristian?

2. I can positively contradict this assertion,—‘All but the professed disciples of Thomas Paine, will bear witness to the integrity and upright conduct of the Methodist preachers.’ There are thousands in our connexion, that are no more disciples of Thomas Paine, than Messrs. Mather, Pawson, and Benson, who are as warm in opposing the undue power and influence of the Methodist preachers, as any other class of men in our body. They question the integrity and uprightness of the preachers as much or more, than others do of a different sentiment; and what is more strange, these worthy fathers know it is so.

3. My ‘levelling principles,’ it is true, would banish the idea of Methodistical bishops—executive heads—  
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building committees of preachers, and bring Methodism equal to primitive christianity, in every point were it possible. And the persons who have 'imbibed my spirit,' are aiming at the same end.

4. It seems a dubious case, whether it would not be best for persons of this description to leave us. Perhaps it would be dangerous to put them away. If they could be provoked to retire, then all things might go on as usual, unless others were to rise up and imbibe their spirit.

5. The matters we contend for, are represented of 'no moment.' Is it of no moment for the preachers to have the power and influence they possess, as it is described at the beginning of this answer? If the peace and prosperity of a large part of our body be of no moment, then this assertion is true. But if the welfare and happiness of thousands—of the greatest part of the connexion, be of moment, it is certainly necessary to contend lawfully for the privileges of the people.

6. It is easier to call my pamphlets 'mushroom-productions,' and the Manchester, Salford, Ashton, &c. friends 'a pigmy tribe of scribblers,' than to answer what we have published. It is not always men of learning and renown, that do the most good to their fellow creatures.

7. We never wished a 'total alteration of our doctrine, and discipline.' We only wish those laws and rules that are contrary to the scriptures, and the rights of the people, to be in a 'revolutionary state.' Then, perhaps, in due time, they would be renounced, and others established, according to the direction of scriptures. Representing us as wanting a 'total change of doctrine and discipline,' may affect weak minds, but the falsity of the opinion is too glaring to be admitted, by those who have candidly read what we have published.

If the following words could be depended on, it would be happy for our people:—'We are bold to say, and you may depend upon it, that the conference are disposed to give you, and the whole body, all the satisfaction that can reasonably be desired, respecting every part of our economy.'

Was not this declaration made use of to the delegates last conference? And yet, were ever laws enacted more arbitrary, and more oppressive than the preachers made at that time? Is it not reasonable that delegates should attend,



both district meetings and the conference, and would not this give satisfaction, were they allowed to act in union with the preachers? Can their bold assertion be true, or the people depend on it, while they use every scheme in their power, to have secret district meetings, and a secret conference?

There is something very artful in the following expressions: 'We shall, as heretofore—at the recommendation of the leaders, or a majority of them, nominate persons to take accounts of all the weekly and quarterly receipts and disbursements. We shall admit, from time to time, to act as local preachers, those whom the leaders and stewards, or local preachers, name and recommend. As heretofore, they will receive any address, in any circuit or district, by word or writing, from any trustees, leaders, stewards, local preachers, or even private members of a district.—— Here, the case of any person that has already been an approved local preacher, and proposes to travel, and is properly recommended, suppose by a majority of the leaders or local preachers of a society or circuit, where he resides, shall be considered, that if he be judged called, and qualified for the work, he may be mentioned at the conference. Now the general meeting of the conference, as well as the particular one of the districts, will always be open to the addresses and applications of any individual trustee, leader, steward, local preacher, or private member, as well as to any number of each, and due attention, we believe, will be paid to such addresses or applications.'

Have the conference made any laws to bind the preachers to act according to these declarations? or will they make laws to bind themselves on this head? Have they heretofore appointed leaders and stewards, by the concurrence of a majority of the leaders and stewards of the places where such appointments took place? If they receive addresses, &c. from leaders, &c. as heretofore, will they not also burn and destroy them as *heretofore*?——If a preacher be ever so well recommended to a district meeting, do they not reserve a power to accept or reject him in the conference, when he is recommended there?——Is there any thing like positive law in this matter? Is it not designed to impose upon the people, as though they had pursued this plan, when it is known they have acted contrary

trary to it in a thousand instances?—Instances which are well known in a vast number of circuits.

Yet these worthy fathers ask, ‘ what can you object to this? What is there *unreasonable or unscriptural* in this plan of proceeding; wherein can it be altered for the better? If you say, it is liable to abuse, we own it. But we ask, what is not? Is there—or was there ever—or can there be any plan or system, civil or religious, which is not, or has not been liable to abuse? Is not the system of christianity—is not the work of God himself, whether in nature or in grace, liable to abuse, and is it not abused daily? Was not the economy of heaven itself abused, and that by angels? All that we can do, dear brethren, is to guard against abuses of every kind, as far as human prudence or foresight can go, or to remedy them when they occur.—This we have done from year to year, and, by the help of God, purpose to continue to do. And in this we desire both your prayers and advice, from time to time.’

On this passage let us remark, 1. This plan which they allude to, is not established by positive law. The preachers can set it aside when they please. A great number of them hardly ever attend to it. When they do, it is not of *necessity* but of *choice*.

2. The system I have described in the beginning of this Answer, exists in all its force. And it is both ‘ unreasonable and unscriptural.’

3. It must either be altered for a better, or Methodism will soon be at (what Mr. Rodda calls) its *ne plus ultra*—its final end.

4. If the best of systems have been abused by angels and men, is it reasonable to suppose, that Methodist preachers are exalted above both, and on a bad system can act up-rightly? If the preachers, on the system we oppose, were to act in every thing according to the scriptures, we might justly suppose them to be more than men—if not more than angels?

5. Do the preachers endeavour ‘ to remedy from year to year’ what is wrong? or do they keep adding more oppressive laws and rules to those which exist, to the great injury of the rights of the people?

Having gone through the pamphlet, and noticed most of the parts, which are *worthy of observation*, I shall conclude, with a few observations :

Observe 1. Messrs. Mather, &c. hint at my obscure situation, and the circumstances attending it. Perhaps it was equal to what our blessed Redeemer and his apostles were blessed with.—Born of ‘pious and honest parents’ in the same town that gave birth to Mr. Wesley, is to me a source of thankfulness, to the God of my mercies. Had I set myself up for a gentleman, and acted out of character, this might have been alledged as a crime against me.—I apprehend, that the birth of my opponents, and their early situations in life, were not superior to mine. Was it so with any of the three that appear to reflect on me on this account? It is not birth, nor situation in early life, that are so much to be noticed, as the improvement we make in our different spheres afterwards.

2. I am represented as having been of little or no use to the connexion. In a private letter, Mr. Pawson made it out, that I had been instrumental, with the help of a number of colleagues, of adding one hundred and ten to the society. But here he has reduced the number to thirty. About fifteen preachers added this number to the society in 11 or 12 years. Two for each person. Does not Mr. Pawson in some of his discourses inform his hearers, that a soul is worth a thousand worlds. Now, if I have been instrumental in converting two persons, is not this acquisition of as much value as two thousand worlds? But does Mr. Pawson argue fairly on the subject? Does he suppose that none died in the 11 years he alludes to? Or that none left the Methodists and joined the Dissenters? Or that none which we found in the class-papers, were put out of connexion for their immoral conduct? Or that none left the society in Newcastle on account of Mr. Cownley’s giving the sacrament? Or that a few left on account of my writing the *Progress of Liberty*?

If these were numbered, they would make the thirty several hundreds. Mr. Pawson, with a sneer, may say, ‘Judge then of the usefulness of those who are so much his inferiors, and then say, where have all the people in the connexion come from? Who has begotten me these?’ (See the 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>d</sup> pages of the *Monitor*.)

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3. They represent me as 'ruining the cause of God.'—That the progress of strife and contention was such, in my last circuit and in the neighbourhood, as you can only have an 'imperfect idea of them, in comparison of what you would have, had you been in those parts, or had you heard the affecting accounts given of them by Mr. Hunter.' Now, I call this hearsay evidence. Mr. Hunter praised both the Progress of Liberty and the Newcastle Address, till he learned the sentiments of the leading preachers; and as he is nearly at his journey's end, he thought it right to submit to their judgment, and enter his protest against me. The violent opposition of the London preachers and others, was the cause of any thing particularly affecting.—— And I am bold to affirm, that Alnwick circuit, and the circuits in that neighbourhood, were very far from being in the state these preachers have represented them, on my account, or on any other account. Though enquiry, strife, disputes, divisions, &c. &c. are laid to my account, yet I am fully persuaded, every thinking person will trace them to another source; and we may be allowed to prophesy, that they will never have an end, until the preachers will adopt a more excellent plan.

Mr. Benson may declare, 'I have opened and raked up sinners repeatedly, and to the very bottom.'—That I 'tear limb from limb the members of the mystical body of the Lord—leave them bleeding to death—cover the ground with the dislocated and fractured bones—their mangled flesh, and quivering members.'

These expressions are more calculated to make a butcher sick, than to enlighten the minds of the followers of Christ. If Mr. Benson considered his audience, he would not make use of such low metaphors in his preaching, as he frequently does; and he would carefully avoid it in writing.

Mr. Thomas Taylor, who now is a violent opposer of me and my friends, did once write the sentiments of his heart, when himself, and a number of his brethren, were opposed and persecuted.

I shall beg leave to quote a passage or two from his work, and leave the reader to apply them:—'As for giving offence, we cannot help that: we know the carnal mind is enmity against God; and so is the friendship of  
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this world. The messages the prophets were charged with, are often stiled *burdens*, because they were calculated to give offence, yet they were charged to be faithful in delivering them. Deut. iv. 2. and x. 30. Rev. xxii. 18, 19.—Jer. i. 7. Ezek. xxxiii. 1, 10. Did not our Lord give offence both in life and doctrine? Did he not say, I am come to send fire on the earth? Yet he was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and in his mouth was no guile. Did not his apostles give offence? And who were offended more than the Jews: especially their rulers and teachers? Did not the primitive christians give offence? As likewise the *Waldenses and Albigenes*, those first reformers from popery and superstition. Did not Luther and the rest of the reformers give offence? Did not the non-conformists give offence; yea, even Mr. Wesley's ancestors, his great grand father, Bartholomew Wesley; his grand father, John Wesley, and his grand father by his mother, Dr. Anesley; did not these men give offence to church bigots, for which they suffered the spoiling of their goods, yea, moreover, bonds and imprisonments?—And finally, I ask, who has given greater offence in this age, than Mr. Wesley himself?

‘I would say to all the Methodists—beware of a persecuting spirit; and beware of every thing that wears the appearance of compulsion! It strongly indicates, that if such had bonds and imprisonments at their command, they would put them in force against such as differ from them. Besides, in all such cases, violent opposition always defeats its own intention. No one acts freely, contrary to the judgment he has formed of a thing; and remember, where the Spirit of the Lord is, **THERE IS LIBERTY.**’ Has Mr. Taylor forgotten his own words?

4. Mr. Pawson declares, ‘that in Mr. Rider’s house, at Manchester Conference, a very respectable person, of well known veracity, said, I declared, if I were one of the committee, I would make short work of it! For I would give the trustees every thing they asked, and yet I would give them nothing: for I would express myself so, that every sentence should be capable of a double meaning, and I would deceive them all.’

This charge is so notoriously false, that such a vile sentiment never entered into my heart. And I call upon Mr. Pawson, to bring forward his ‘woman of veracity,’ and take

take her oath of it, if she dare, in the presence of that God, who will soon be both her judge and mine. I deny the charge *in toto*, and call for substantial witness to prove it. If Mr. Pawson supposes that he can make 'my name stink through the nation,' by such means as this, he will find himself mistaken.

It is exceedingly mortifying to him and others, to see the trustees friendly to me in many places. But this share, designed to entangle them, shall be broken, and they shall be delivered. He may write to his friends, as he did to Mr. W———, in Liverpool, 'You may depend on it, that cause, which wants so much lying, slandering, back-biting, evil-speaking, misrepresentation, &c. &c. &c.—— as I am infallibly certain that he and his friends are guilty of, to support it, will not, cannot stand long.' How easy it would be to retort these words upon himself and his friends! And it would be possible to add, 'I am infallibly certain' it is so. But would this carry any conviction of any thing farther, than an infallible proof of presumption and insolence. If I be guilty of all the evils he names, I hope my friends cannot be charged with them.

As a presumptive proof, that this 'woman of veracity,' is a false accuser, I will insert the paper I drew up as a protest against such duplicity, which was signed by fifty seven preachers, and given to Mr. Bradford. It was at the same conference, and about the same time, that she declared she heard me deliver the words which Mr. Pawson has published.

'Honoured Fathers and Brethren,

'We are *extremely* sorry, that any thing should cause us to differ in sentiment from a majority of the conference. We are *constrained* to do it, from a principle of truth and honesty. It appears to us, that no rule made in this house should be capable of bearing a double meaning. We are sorry to find an *appearance* of duplicity in some of our rules. We exceedingly object to the addition which is made to the first proposition of reconciliation, unless you add to it Messrs. Thompson, Benson, and Bradburn's explanation of the word *separation*. If this be not granted, we jointly enter our protest against that, and every other rule of the same



same nature. And intreat the preachers met in conference, to respect their character, by making their rules so explicit that no person may misunderstand them.

‘ We are your affectionate brethren in the gospel, &c.’

Now, I appeal to every reasonable person, whether it is probable, that I should draw up this paper, and get it signed by fifty-seven preachers, at the hazard of frowns and rebuffs from the leading preachers, and on the same day, or near the same day, make use of the detestable words that are palmed upon me? If this ‘ woman of veracity,’ come forward, and take her oath, it will not do, unless she can bring as strong evidence of my guilt, as this paper does of my innocence in this matter.

5. If Messrs. Mather, &c. come forward again, let them meet our principles and confute them—if they can. But they must remember, nothing but quoting *positive laws*, can overturn what we declare to be the state of our affairs, as it alludes to the things we oppose. Saying, it is ‘ our general custom,’ or ‘ our rule,’ is nothing, unless there be law to bind. If the controversy be confined to *principles*, it will soon be ended. A few pages will be sufficient to make this matter clear.

6. The latter part of their pamphlet, I cordially agree to, and wish it may be engraven on all our hearts. Whatever any person thinks to the contrary, I would a thousand times sooner see the Methodists united, on a liberal plan, than behold them divided in sentiments and affections. Or than see the connexion rent in twain. If this would be accomplished, by my retiring into obscurity, or leaving Europe, I would chearfully submit to it, for the general good.

May that God, that led Israel through the wilderness, become our defence, and may he lead us into such a blessed union with himself, and each other, that the gates of hell may never prevail against us!

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A. KILHAM.

SALFORD, MANCHESTER, 16th Dec. 1796.

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